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National Security Action Memorandum #58

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June 30, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

The President desires that the National Security Council be able to evaluate various proposals for US approaches to the Berlin problem, in terms of their concrete implications for action. To this end, it is requested that:

I

The Secretary of Defense should submit by Thursday, July 6, his recommendations as to preparatory measures to improve the US capability to conduct the courses of action described in paragraph 1, below, which need to be launched immediately, regardless of decisions about the scale of action that is eventually intended -- measures which should not be deferred until after the NSC meeting of July 13 because of the long lead times involved.

II

The following should be submitted in time for an NSC meeting July 13:

1. The Secretary of Defense should prepare recommendations concerning the timing and nature of the preparations to be taken to create a capability for:

- (a) a garrison and civilian (QBAL) airlift by October 15;
- (b) naval harassment and blockade of Bloc shipping by November 15;
- (c) large scale non-nuclear ground action within four months of such time after October 15 as it may be ordered - with tactical air support, as necessary - assuming appropriate use of forces in Europe and assuming reinforcement from the US as necessary to permit the use of two, four, six, and twelve divisions in Europe for the purposes stated in section C of chapter IV of Mr. Acheson's preliminary report to the President, including preparations which will ensure that nuclear weapons now in Europe are not used in the course of such action without direct Presidential authorization;

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(d) keeping SAC in a state of maximum readiness for flexible use over a prolonged period of crisis, without degrading its effectiveness.

These preparations should include only steps which are directly related to the four military purposes set forth above, and should not include measures primarily designed for psychological effect which could be considered provocative or measures which run counter to the US policy toward NATO approved by the President on April 26.

The cost of these preparations and the number of men who would need to be called up for training or added to the US forces should be estimated. Information should be provided concerning the funds and/or authority which would need to be sought from the Congress. Our concern at this point is with the general magnitude of the preparations required and the public impression they will create, not with the details of these preparations or the manner in which the forces would be used.

2. The Secretary of Defense should submit recommendations as to the magnitude and character of a permanent increase in the size of the US defense establishment which might be executed in the event Soviet actions regarding Berlin appeared to foreshadow a long period of greatly heightened tensions. The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State should submit recommendations concerning the timing and nature of the actions that might be taken to bring the prospect of such an increase to the attention of the Soviets for deterrent effect.

3. The Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Treasury and the Secretary of Commerce, should submit, through the Secretary of State, recommendations concerning the timing and nature of the preparations to be taken to create a US and allied capability for applying economic sanctions of progressively increasing severity against the Bloc, beginning October 15.

4. The Secretary of the Treasury and the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers should submit very preliminary recommendations as to the timing and nature of the preparations to be taken to ensure that execution of the above actions would cause minimum dislocation to the US economy and balance of payments. A fuller report will be expected later.

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5. The Secretary of State and the Director of Central Intelligence should submit joint recommendations as to the timing and nature of the preparations to be taken to create a capability for inciting progressively increasing instability in East Germany and Eastern Europe, at such time after October 15 as it may be ordered. Recommendations should also be submitted as to the timing and nature of the steps to be taken to bring this capability to the attention of the Soviets before they make their critical decisions about Berlin.
6. The Secretary of State and the Director of USIA should submit recommendations as to the timing and nature of the steps to be taken to place our case regarding Berlin and Germany before the American public and the world and to gain support for the above preparations, as may be necessary.
7. The Secretary of State should submit recommendations concerning the timing and nature of our negotiating positions on Berlin and Germany prior to the signing of a peace treaty, and concerning the posture which the allied powers should adopt toward the appearance of East German personnel along the access routes following a peace treaty. These recommendations need not be submitted by the NSC meeting of July 13, but the Secretary may wish to discuss possible alternatives in a preliminary way at that meeting in order to keep the political framework of the other studies before the Council. Recommendations on this subject will be discussed more fully at a later NSC meeting.
8. The Secretary of State is given general responsibility for coordinating the various studies covered in this directive and for developing an integrated timetable intended to achieve (i) maximum deterrent effect with respect to the Soviets, and (ii) the agreement and maximum cooperation of our Allies. The Instrument for this purpose will be the Interdepartmental Group on Berlin Contingency Planning, hereby redesignated as the Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Germany and Berlin. This Group will be under the chairmanship of the Secretary of State or such representative as he may designate in his stead.

McGeorge Bundy

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